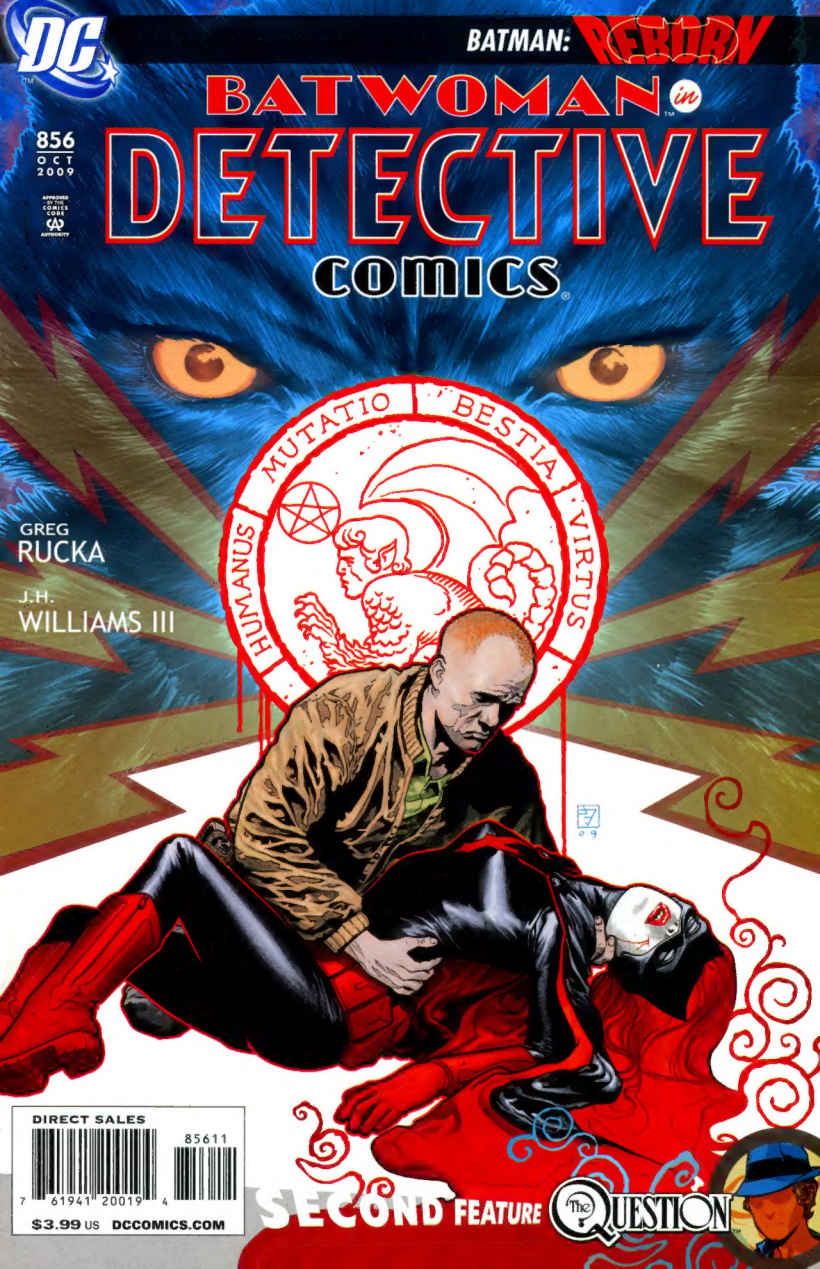
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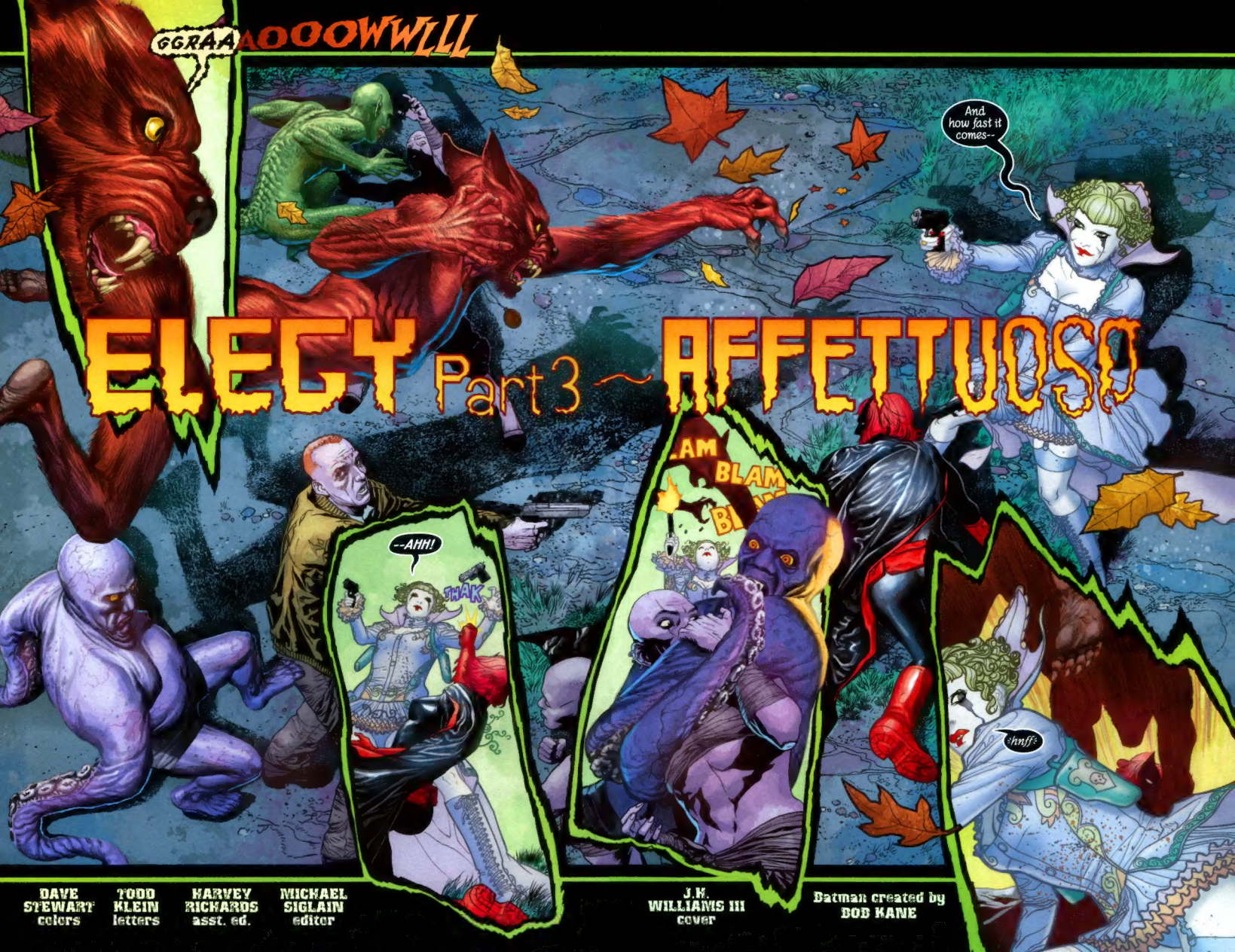
SECOND FEATURE
The QUESTION

GREG RUCKA
WRITER
HIGHRRRR MADAMEGRRR
rrrWWWW
He might bite...
...I can bite anything I want.
WWWLLL
ASBOT.
J H WILLIAMS III
ARTIST



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Batman created by
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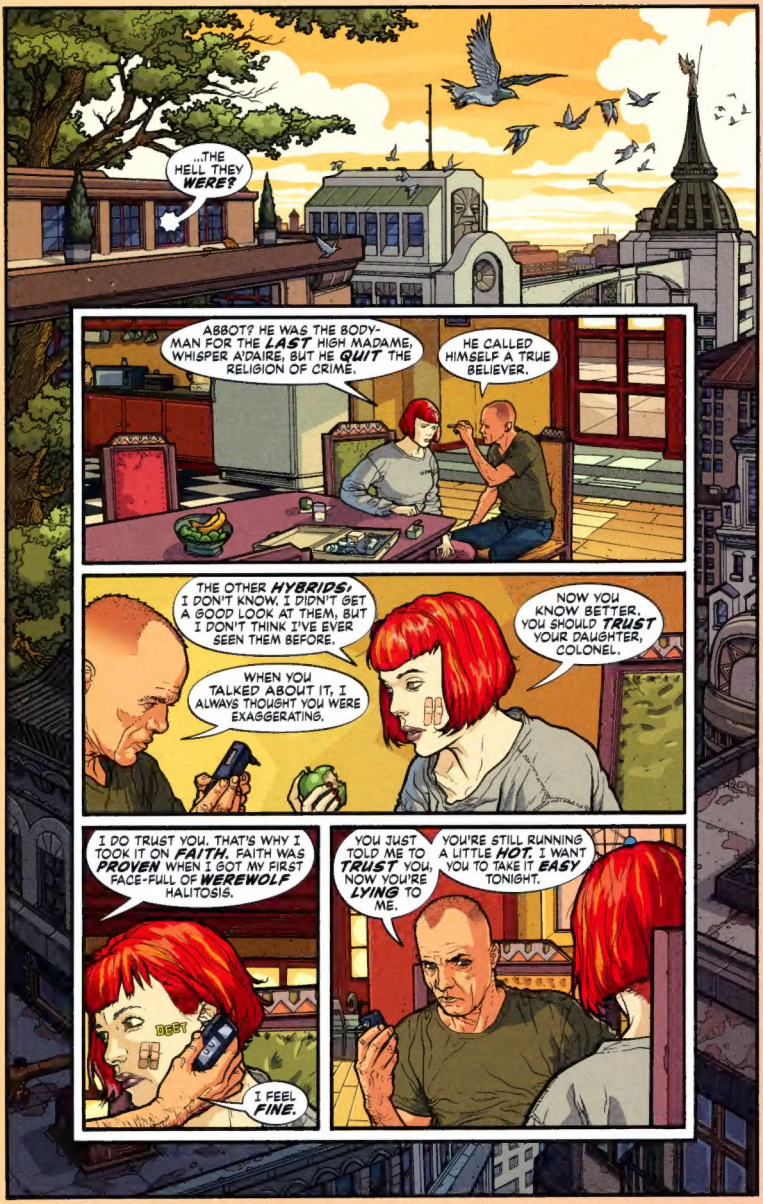
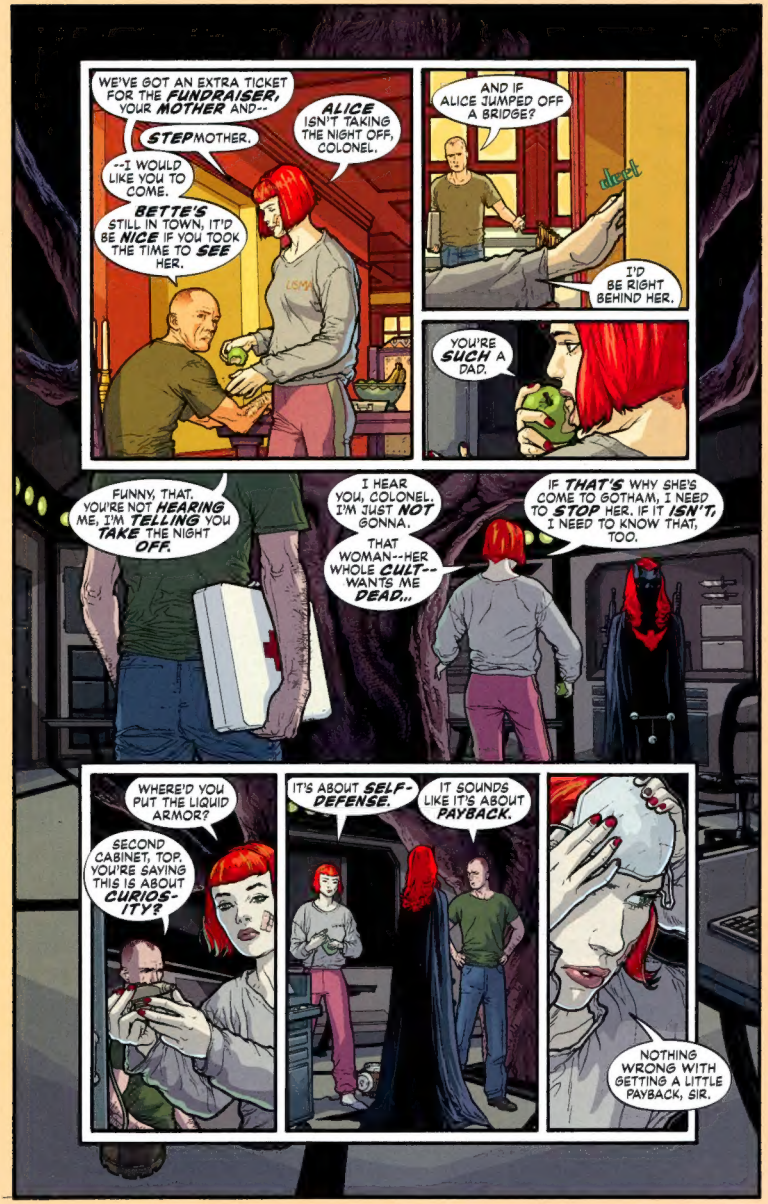
Stupid things!
COME ON COME ON GET UP!
But aren't you going to run and help her?
KKITCH
AAHH!!
BLAM BLAM
GNRRR
RRRR STAYRRR CLOSE TO ME RRRRLLL

OPEN IT!
THEY POISONED HER.
NO IDEA WHAT THEY USED, NO IDEA WHAT ANTI-TOXIN--
LET ME RRRR...
...Sniff...
...BLOOD GRRRWLLL AGENT, SOME KIND OF OPIOID...
I'VE GOT NALAXONE IN MY JUMP KIT.
Chksss
UNH
HAYES! WHERE'S RRRR CLAIRE?
SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO TRY AND LEAD THEM AWAY!
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S GONNA WORK. WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME!
GRRRRLLL

GO! GO NOW!
WHAT--
--WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?
THE TRUE BELIEVERS.
ONCE UPON A TIME, AT LEAST.
KEEP HER SAFE, MATE.
SHE'S GOT TO SURVIVE.

Good-bye...
...till we meet again.
HIGH MADAME... WITH ALL RESPECT, IS THIS WISE?
ALLOWING THEM TO ESCAPE MEANS WE WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THEM LATER.
Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas.
Queens have to be dignified, you know...
...and if I really am a queen, I shall be able to manage it quite well in time...


...THE HELL THEY WERE?
ABBOT? HE WAS THE BODY-MAN FOR THE LAST HIGH MADAME, WHISPER A'DAIRE, BUT HE QUIT THE RELIGION OF CRIME.
HE CALLED HIMSELF A TRUE BELIEVER.
THE OTHER HYBRIDS, I DON'T KNOW. I DIDN'T GET A GOOD LOOK AT THEM, BUT I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN THEM BEFORE.
WHEN YOU TALKED ABOUT IT, I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU WERE EXAGGERATING.
NOW YOU KNOW BETTER. YOU SHOULD TRUST YOUR DAUGHTER, COLONEL.
I DO TRUST YOU. THAT'S WHY I TOOK IT ON FAITH. FAITH WAS PROVEN WHEN I GOT MY FIRST FACE-FULL OF WEREWOLF HALITOSIS.
BEEP
I FEEL FINE.
YOU JUST TOLD ME TO TRUST YOU, NOW YOU'RE LYING TO ME.
YOU'RE STILL RUNNING A LITTLE HOT. I WANT YOU TO TAKE IT EASY TONIGHT.


WE'VE GOT AN EXTRA TICKET FOR THE FUNDRAISER, YOUR MOTHER AND--
STEPMOTHER.
--I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COME.
BETTE'S STILL IN TOWN, IT'D BE NICE IF YOU TOOK THE TIME TO SEE HER.
ALICE ISN'T TAKING THE NIGHT OFF, COLONEL.
AND IF ALICE JUMPED OFF A BRIDGE?
I'D BE RIGHT BEHIND HER.
YOU'RE SUCH A DAD.
FUNNY, THAT. YOU'RE NOT HEARING ME, I'M TELLING YOU TAKE THE NIGHT OFF.
I HEAR YOU, COLONEL. I'M JUST NOT GONNA.
THAT WOMAN--HER WHOLE CULT--WANTS ME DEAD...
IF THAT'S WHY SHE'S COME TO GOTHAM, I NEED TO STOP HER. IF IT ISN'T, I NEED TO KNOW THAT, TOO.
WHERE'D YOU PUT THE LIQUID ARMOR?
SECOND CABINET, TOP. YOU'RE SAYING THIS IS ABOUT CURIOSITY?
IT'S ABOUT SELF-DEFENSE.
IT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S ABOUT PAYBACK.
NOTHING WRONG WITH GETTING A LITTLE PAYBACK, SIR.

NO, NOTHING WRONG WITH IT AT ALL.
UNTIL THE DAY YOU WAKE UP AND REALIZE YOU'VE LOST FIVE YEARS OF YOUR LIFE CHASING AFTER IT.
THAT'S NOT WHY YOU PUT ON THIS UNIFORM.
AND IT SURE AS HELL ISN'T WHY I SUPPORT YOUR WEARING IT.
--GRAYSON! MISTER GRAYSON!
--FROM THIS YEAR'S SWIMSUIT ISSUE?
C'MON, GIVE US A SMILE, HERE!
...SEE THE WOMAN HE'S GOT WITH HIM?
--AT THESE THINGS, ALWAYS THE SAME, ALWAYS--
...THE MAYOR DRUNK AGAIN, I SWEAR IF SHE...
...COMMISSIONER ARRIVED, DOES HE LOOK TIRED TO YOU...?
...ANYPLACE A GUY CAN GET A BEER AROUND HERE?
129th ANNUAL G.C.P.D. Charity Ball
KATE!!!
KATE!
OH, KATIE...
...YOU COULDN'T WEAR SOMETHING MORE APPROPRIATE?

...NOT THAT I DON'T APPROVE, IT'S YOUR LIFE, OF COURSE.
I JUST DON'T THINK IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR A FORMAL EVENT. IT'S LIKE YOU'RE TRYING TO DRAW ATTENTION TO YOURSELF.
NO, JUST MAKING SURE I DON'T STAY HIDDEN.
I THINK SHE LOOKS GREAT.
YOU'RE LOOKING VERY NICE YOURSELF, BETTE.
KANE, GO.
SO, COUSIN... HAVEN'T SEEN YOU AROUND SINCE I GOT TO TOWN.
I'VE BEEN BUSY. YOU STAYING LONG?
ACTUALLY, YEAH, I'M ENROLLING AT GU.
THAT WAS THE BASE, I'VE GOT TO GO.
THE ARMY'S TIMING, AS ALWAYS, IS IMPECCABLE.
IT'S CALLED DUTY FOR A REASON, CATHERINE.
SO NOW THAT I'M GOING TO BE LIVING HERE, I WAS THINKING MAYBE WE COULD HANG OUT OR SOMETHING.
IT'S BEEN KIND OF--
EXCUSE ME, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
--LONELY.
LIKE FATHER, LIKE DAUGHTER.

EXCUSE ME, PARDON ME--
--RENEE?
RENEE!
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
SORRY, I'M SORRY..
..THOUGHT YOU WERE SOMEONE ELSE.
NICE THING ABOUT A TUXEDO...

...YOU DON'T FEEL BAD WHEN OTHER PEOPLE SHOW UP WEARING THE SAME THING.
MAGGIE SAWYER, NICE TO MEET YOU.
KATE KANE.
KATE? NOT KATHY, KATHERINE, KATHLEEN? NOT KATIE?
MAGGIE? NOT MAGS, MARGIE, MARJORIE? NOT MARGARET?
TOUCHÉ. IT'S MARGARET, ACTUALLY, BUT YOU CALL ME THAT, I'LL ARREST YOU.
MY STEP-MOTHER'S A CATHERINE. INSISTS ON CALLING ME KATIE.
YOU'RE GCPD?
I'M THE CAPTAIN OF THE MAJOR CRIMES UNIT.
SERIOUSLY?
YOU SOUND SURPRISED.
A LITTLE, MAYBE. THAT CAN'T BE EASY.
DAYS WHEN YOU GO UP AGAINST TWO-FACE OR SCARE-CROW. NO, IT'S NOT.
THAT WASN'T EXACTLY WHAT I MEANT.
I KNOW.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO DANCE, KATE?

WE'RE OFFENDING MY STEPMOTHER.
IS THAT A PROBLEM?
YOU KIDDING? I LIVE FOR IT. YOU DON'T MIND IF PEOPLE STARE?
I'VE BEEN OUT A LONG TIME. ANYONE IN THE DEPARTMENT WITH A PROBLEM WITH THAT KNOWS BETTER THAN TO SAY SO TO MY FACE.
FEAR OF BROKEN TEETH?
FEAR OF GORDON'S ZERO-TOLERANCE DISCRIMINATION POLICY.
NO WONDER SO MANY LESBIANS BECOME COPS.
KNOWN A FEW, HAVE YOU?
YOU'RE MY SECOND.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FIRST?
SHE LEFT.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU MISS HER.
...I DO.
WHAT ABOUT YOU? SPECIAL SOMEONE?
FOR A LONG TIME, YES. BUT IT ENDED A COUPLE MONTHS AGO.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU MISS HER.
I DO. SHE'S IN METROPOLIS, I'M HERE. THE LONG-DISTANCE THING KILLED IT.
I'M SORRY.
THAT'S KIND OF YOU. I SUPPOSE THE UPSIDE IS THAT I CAN ASK FOR YOUR PHONE NUMBER WITHOUT FEELING GUILTY ABOUT IT.
HEH. YOU CAN ASK--
MIND IF I CUT IN?

IF I DID WOULD THAT STOP YOU?
I'D LET THE LADY DECIDE FOR HERSELF.
VIRTUS
YOU GET ONE DANCE.
MORE THAN FAIR.
YOU CAN RELAX, TWICE-NAMED. I'M NOT HERE TO REVEAL YOUR SECRETS.
GIVE ME ONE REASON I SHOULD BELIEVE YOU, ABBOT.
I SAVED YOUR LIFE LAST NIGHT. I'D THINK THAT'D BUY ME A LITTLE OF YOUR TRUST.
IT'S THE ONLY REASON I HAVEN'T TURNED YOU FALSETTO.
YOU THINK I STILL FOLLOW THE DARK FAITH? THAT I FOLLOW ALICE?
I'M TOLD YOU'RE A TRUE BELIEVER.
I AM. AND THAT'S MADE ME A HERETIC.
THE CRIME BIBLE FORETOLD THE DEATH OF THE TWICE-NAMED DAUGHTER OF CAIN.
THE PROPHECY SAID BATWOMAN HAD TO DIE FOR THE NEW WORLD TO RISE; IT GAVE THE TIME AND PLACE...
...YET HERE YOU ARE. SO THE PROPHECY WAS WRONG.
WHICH MEANS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO LIVE.
THAT'S WHY YOU SAVED ME?

I BELIEVE IN THE DARK FAITH, MISS KANE. JUST NOT THEIR INTERPRETATION OF IT.
THE NEW HIGH MADAME, ALICE, SHE KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU AND YOURS. AND SHE'S BLOODY-WELL OFF HER NUT.
SO I'D GATHERED.
WHAT YOU HAVEN'T GATHERED IS SHE'S NOT AFTER YOU.
NOT TO INFLATE MY OWN SELF-WORTH, BUT IF IT'S NOT ABOUT ME, WHY IS SHE HERE?
IT'S GOTHAM. WHY DO YOU THINK THE PROPHET MANNHEIM CAME HERE?
THIS IS SODOM AND GOMORRAH TO THEM, AND THAT MAKES IT THEIR VATICAN CITY, THEIR MECCA, THEIR JERUSALEM.
SHE WANTS TO RULE?
SHE WANTS TO SUCCEED WHERE HE FAILED.
MANNHEIM TRIED TO DESTROY GOTHAM.
AND NOW WE'RE ON THE SAME PAGE, YOU AND ME.
THAT WOULD... THAT WOULD REQUIRE A WMD OF SOME KIND, OR SOME SORT OF MILITARY...
...OH MY GOD...
KATE?
EVERYTHING OKAY?
BETTE, YOU HAVE A PHONE?
SURE, HERE--
C'MON, COLONEL... ANSWER YOUR DAMN PHONE...

Oh, please don't make such faces, dear!
de-doot de-doot de-doo
COLONEL? DAD, LISTEN--
Hush!
The game's going on rather better now.
To be continued...

...MATTER WITH HER FACE?
DUNNO, MR. CHANDLESS. MAYBE A MASK?
CAN'T GET IT OFF A' HER.
NO MARKET FOR THAT, MR. BOLT
YOU'RE NOT THINKIN' WE KEEP HER?
NOT IF SHE'S THE ONE VARGA WAS CRYING ABOUT. TOO DANGEROUS...
...TAKE HER SOMEPLACE, MAKE SURE SHE NEVER COMES BACK.
IF YOU SAY SO...
...SEEMS A WASTE, THAT'S ALL.
The QUESTION: PIPELINE
WRITER GREG RUCKA • ARTIST CULLY HAMNER CHAPTER ONE / PART THREE

S'WHY I GAVE UP DRINKING--
OH, NOT GOOD--
--REALLY NOT GOOD--
THUP THUP
THUP
THUP
TAG APPLIED FOR
GAH!

P2
VARGA..
...VARGA, IF THAT'S YOU...
..WE TOLD YOU TO STAY AWAY...

I'D SAY SOMETHING WITTY.
GAHH!
BUT THE FACT IS, I'M COLD...
NHAAG!
I'M WET...
..AND YOU TRIED TO KILL ME
HNFFF!
I HAVE QUESTIONS YOU HAVE ANSWERS.
WE'LL START WITH THE EASY ONE..

..WHERE CAN I FIND LOUISA SOLIZ?
W-WHO?
NO. THAT'S WRONG.
AND AS I EXPLAINED, I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
HEY
AMH!
WAIT--
I CAN START BREAKING THE REST OF YOUR JOINTS.
OR YOU CAN START TALKING.
I DON'T KNOW ANY LOUISA! WE NEVER BOTHER WITH THEIR NAMES--
--THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM ANYWAY--
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?

THERE'S NO POINT, IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYWAY--
--NOBODY'S GOING TO ASK THEM--
HOW MANY?
HOW MANY WOMEN?!
THIRTY, FORTY, MAYBE. THEY'RE ALMOST ALWAYS MIGRANTS, SOUTH AMERICANS OR ASIAN...
...PEOPLE NO ONE WILL MISS.
WHERE? WHERE DO THEY GO?
}HNN{
...WE'VE GOT A BUYER... DOWN IN LONG BEACH--
}GNN{
BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM

BLAM
BLAM
YEAH.
YOU BETTER RUN.
TO BE CONTINUED!

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